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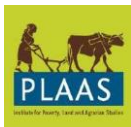International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague, Netherlands

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Abstract

The case of Zimbabwe's radical Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) from 2000 provides a focus for understanding the interplay of rural politics and state-making in a post-liberation setting in Africa, where the failures of neoliberalism – and attempts at 'structural adjustment' – provoked a major political and economic crisis. The combination of authoritarianism and redistributive populism, whilst serving the regime's agenda, has also transformed rural accumulation opportunities for some, albeit with limited democratic freedoms. It is these tensions at the heart of the authoritarian-populist project that this paper will explore for the Zimbabwe context, alongside the emergent rural politics that offer hints of more emancipatory alternatives from below.

Introduction

The FTLRP suggested to many that a new politics was in the making. Through the land reform, ZANU-PF created cross-class rural support for land reform, between a new group of smallholders and a potentially loyal agrarian capitalist class, mediated by state and security interests. This is fragile, contested and variable across the country, but allows us to explore the underlying political-economic characteristics of authoritarian populism at this crucial moment in Zimbabwe's history. Whilst having a broad, electorally-important populist appeal in Zimbabwe's rural areas, it also represented forms of authoritarianism, characteristic of a nationalist liberation party-state, with military origins. By focusing on the FTLRP period, and its antecedents, this paper will examine how President Mugabe's rule has been characterized by a combination of an authoritarian approach, especially in terms of how he has dealt with dissent, and populism, characterized by land redistribution associated with grand rhetoric against the 'forces of imperialism'.

Yet authoritarianism has its limits, and another aim of the paper is to explore what responses have emerged that counter the impositions of the party-state and associated security services. Through a series of case studies, the paper will reflect on new forms of associational life in land reform areas, linked to new economic activities and political mobilization. Such forms of 'emancipation' will be examined in relation to tensions and struggles between the alliances struck during the FTLRP period, between the party-state, the military/war veterans, poor smallholders and new (quasi)-capitalist land holders.

Revisiting Discourses on Rural Politics in Zimbabwe

Whilst rural marginalisation has been a dominant discourse for the past three decades in Southern Africa in particular, literature on rural responses and struggles has been sparse. Studies of everyday responses and tactics of rural social reproduction in Zimbabwe and in Southern Africa are critical, they have to shed light not only rural grievances but also on the capacity of the local state (beyond official structures) to adequately respond to the socio-economic and political challenges. Discourse on agrarian change and rural politics in Zimbabwe has tended to overlook localised rural forms of mobilisation and action. The post-independence period debates on rural politics have been contentious in Zimbabwe; scholars such as Von Blackenburg (1984) dismissed the smallholders' demands for land as morally and economically weak because of their low productivity. Sachikonye (1995:132) argued that there is "no independent peasant (rural) organisation Vis à vis the ruling party that has survived or emerged after independence". He was not alone in making these assertions, Bratton (1994) similarly argues that rural politics "is pervaded by a neo-patrimonial political culture which derives from precedents of arbitrary rule established in traditional, colonial and post-colonial regimes" (Bratton, 1994:12). Within such reasoning an objective analysis of organic collective responses to unfair land distribution and exploitative agrarian relations has been very limited.

Rarely did alternative organic forms of social organisation and mobilisation feature in the discourse on broader struggles of economic and political development in Zimbabwe or even in Africa. Suggestions of a rural protest in post-independence Africa were rare, unwelcome and seen as utopian (Amin, 1990:12). Furthermore, the totality of the mode of rule of traditional authority was assumed. As yet there are very few systematic studies into the class dynamics of these struggles, which particular groups participated, how and under what conditions (Veltmeyer, 2005).

The 1980s saw the first signs of attempts to break away from the established orthodoxies of understanding agrarian change in Africa. Two important studies – a collaboration between Beinart and Bundy (1987) and another by Ranger (1985) – on South Africa and Zimbabwe emphasised the interrelationship between social action and social structure. While focusing on rural agency (politics), these works remained attentive to the structural constraints at the local and national levels that have shaped the daily lives of the peasants and limited their range of options. Beinart and Bundy (1987) demonstrated how rural opposition to the Glen Grey Act, which raised taxes and challenged the indigenous land tenure system, compelled the South African government to slow down the process of

land alienation and to abandon the proposed labour tax. Ranger (1985) noted that, in Zimbabwe, 'illegal squatting' allowed peasants to use portions of land long after they had been designated as European areas, and describes how they resorted to acts of sabotage against the property of the settler who had appropriated their land.

There have been few other studies on rural responses and they have made a considerable contribution towards an understanding of the different forms of rural organisation, such as farmers' unions, and how these have influenced agrarian policies especially producer pricing (Bratton, 1986; Skalnes, 1995). Even so, the analysis has been limited and does not adequately delve into the broader meanings of local organisation and mobilisation. Whilst significant attention has been devoted to the analysis of the roles of large farmer unions such as the Commercial Farmers' Union (CFU) and the Zimbabwe Farmers' Unions (ZFU) in terms of the manner in which they influence agricultural pricing and input policies, very little work has been done on the everyday practices and realities of rural households and local formations.

There has been some limited research on local collective action that rejects the myths of isolation and backwardness associated with the peasantry and empirically shows the level of mobilisation into various associational forms (Bratton, 1986; Moyo, 1995, 2000, 2001, 2004; Arnaiz, 1998; Alexander, 1993, 2003, 2006; Burgess, 1997). This group of scholars looked for insights to social organisation and agency from the colonial period and argued that the growing membership of churches was one of the early forms of political expression (Burgess, 1997:129). Furthermore, it has been argued that after land alienations and resettlement into reserves the smallholders went into a process of 'accelerated petty commodity production' – a process of quick adaptation to new cash crops (Ranger, 1985). Prior to colonialism these communities had not virtually engaged in one or other form of commodity production. The accelerated process of 'petty commodity production' took place as a strategy of defiance against the very different economic future planned by the new conquerors (Ranger, 1985:27). The research detailed how rural communities were responding to unfair state policies and market exploitation. Furthermore, there are others who have noted that rural action was not only confined to structured and visible forms of organisation. Many struggles for land reform starting in the colonial period have been championed by underground movements whose inspiration ranged from spirit mediums and militant chiefs to popular claims for restitution (Moyana, 1984, Sadomba, 2008b:163).

Post-Colonial State-making in the Rural Areas

By the time of independence the councils were barely functioning, and in those areas where the war had been fought chiefs had been forced to withdraw from their often ambivalent cooperation or face violent attack (Alexander, 2006:107). The initial efforts of local government reform saw the new government working through district councils established in lieu of African-based chieftaincy councils that had been established by the transitional government and political party structures.

The attainment of independence made local government reform a vital necessity. Among the underlying objectives of local government reform were: to create a modern unified state linked from village to national level; to replace customary authority with democratic institutions; to create an entirely new basis for rural authority; and to institutionalise development (Alexander, 2006:107-111). These reforms were expected to lead to the redefinition of identity outside the narrow customary or tribal limits to create identification with the nation.

The reforms were carried out via two interrelated strategies: firstly, the creation of some new ministries and the deconcentration of others. The Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development (MLGRUD) and the Ministry of Community Development and Cooperatives (MCDC) were introduced as part of local government reforms, and the Ministry of Lands and Agriculture formally introduced provincial and district structures (Stewart et al., 1994). The second strategy of local government reform was the enactment of legislation and directives to put policy changes in motion. The District Councils Act of 1980 (amended in 1981 and 1982) applied to customary lands and consolidated the previously fragmented authorities from over 220 to 55 (Mutizwa-Mangiza, 1985).

The District Councils, which consisted predominantly of elected members, were responsible for principal planning and development within their zones of jurisdiction and had limited powers of taxation. The Prime Minister's Directive (1984-1985) provided for the creation of a hierarchy of representative bodies at village, ward and district levels. The local development committees – the Village and Ward Development Committees (VIDCOs and WADCOs), also composed of elected members, were charged with the responsibility of defining local development needs (Mutizwa-Mangiza, 1985). These development committees were described as "democratic institutions of popular participation to promote the advancement of development objectives set by government, the community and the people" (Alexander, 2006:108).

In 1988 that the GoZ, introduced legislation to formally amalgamate white Rural Councils with black District Councils into 56 Rural District Councils (RDCs). The process was fraught with difficulties. Firstly, the Act did not come into effect until 1992 due to boundary disputes over the jurisdiction of the newly created RDCs. Secondly, these reforms were curtailed by the lack of sufficient devolution of authority, especially in terms of revenue collection. Local authorities remained dependent on the national purse, and in some cases wealthy large- scale commercial farmers subsidised the operations of the councils through donations of money and offered their equipment such as tractors for road maintenance at no charge to the local council. On paper the VIDCOs were supposed to submit their plans to WADCOs, who in turn would submit the development plans to the District Development Committees, in the process bypassing the elected Rural District Councils (RDCs). However, in reality the VIDCOs rarely came up with anything more than lists of needs, WADCOs hardly functioned, and councils did not have the sufficient capacity to analyse and respond to the plans made by the District Development Committees (Alexander, 2006:110). The formulation and implementation of the new local structures was characterised by bureaucratic coercion despite the stated democratic intentions. For instance, the creation of the VIDCO was based on an arbitrary unit of 100 households, a unit that did not necessarily share resources, interests or a common identity.

Furthermore, the newly elected government did not entirely trust the office of the chief and its subordinate structures given the latter's previous alliances with the colonial government, especially from the 1960s to the 1970s. The chiefs had largely benefited from the limited reforms implemented by the colonial government as an attempt to counter the spread of nationalism. However, as Alexander (1994, 2006), Ranger (1985) and Nyambara (2001) have shown, the chiefs did not necessarily accept political cooption but in certain instances attempted to take advantage of local government reforms to insist on further changes which would bolster their authority and probably their interests. Some, such as Chief Rekayi Tangwena, had openly challenged the colonial government in the courts over land alienation and later aligned with the nationalist movement (Moyana, 1984). Government was in a quandary over how to treat the chiefs in the post-independence era, especially given the ruling party's desire to establish its own forms of control in the countryside under the guise of democratic decentralisation.

The Communal Lands Act (CLA-1982 amended in 2002) ascribes land authority to the RDC. It states that a person may occupy and use communal land for agricultural or residential purposes with the consent of the RDC established for the area concerned (GoZ, CLA 1982: 3). It goes on to state that when granting consent the RDC shall "consult and cooperate with the chief appointed to preside over the community concerned in terms of the TLA (1999)". It creates the impression that the RDC is the initial point of contact in granting authority over land, whilst actual practice in the customary areas suggests otherwise. The Act stipulates that the RDCs should

> grant consent only to persons who, according to the customary law of the community that has traditionally occupied and used land in the area concerned, are regarded as forming part of such community (CLA, 1982 amended in 2002).

The underlying objective of the local government reforms was to officially usurp the land-allocating powers of chiefs in a manner very similar to the Native Land Husbandry Act (NLHA) of 1951 and to

introduce new social relations of production that are not defined by belonging to a lineage grouping. In terms of land allocation, the District Council Act (1982, section 8 [2]) required District Councils merely to "have regard to customary law relating to the use and allocation of land allocation". These measures were, however, resisted by chiefs who had enjoyed land allocation powers in the last decade of colonial rule.

In practice, the passing of the District Councils Act (1980) and the introduction of new structures did not necessarily diminish the prestige of the office of the chief, as rural inhabitants continued to defer to traditional authority, especially in land allocations and in resolving land-related disputes (Dzingirai, 1994). In a study of land allocations in Binga, Dzingirai (1994:168) noted that migrants bypassed the Rural District Council and sought permission from traditional authority functionaries such as the chiefs, village heads and influential lineage elders. Even in instances of land conflicts where a land case reached the Rural District Council (RDC), the headman's court (dare) continued to be the primary legal arena for dispute resettlement (Anderson, 1999). Traditional authorities regularly involved themselves in land administration and they were often at 'loggerheads' with elected authorities (Alexander, 2003:587). Rural District Councils and traditional bodies represented two competing 'parallel systems of authority' (Chaumba et al 2003b:587).

A decade long struggle between elected and customary authority over control of land ensued. In 1994 the government's Commission of Enquiry into Land Tenure commented that

> there is evidence that the dissolution of traditional authority and their role in land and natural resources matters at independence was premature, and currently, there is widespread resistance to VIDCO/WADCO structures as credible authorities over land and natural resources (Land Tenure Commission, 1994:33).

The direction of local government took another turn in the second decade of independence when the GoZ introduced the Rural District Councils Act (1996) and the Traditional Leaders Act (1999). Whilst in the previous dispensation prior to the RDC Act (1996) the chiefs had been regarded as ex-officio members of the council, the new legislation did not make any reference to traditional leaders. The RDC Act (1996) is silent not only on the relationship with the chiefs but also on the council's role in terms of the communal lands. The Traditional Leaders Act (TLA, 1999) on the other hand creates the impression that the two institutions of local government can easily work together. In terms of land the TLA (1999) states that the chief will

> ensure that land is allocated in accordance with the Communal Land Act (20:041) and to prevent any unauthorised settlement or use of any land; and to notify the   Rural   District Council of any intended disposal of a homestead and the permanent departure of any inhabitant from his area, and, acting on the advice of the headman, to approve the settlement of any new settler in his area

The position of customary authorities benefited particularly from increasingly central control exerted on elected local councils by both the ruling party and government ministries (Alexander, 2006:109-10). The local accountability of VIDCOs was thus eroded as they were cast in the role of implementing agencies for centrally designed programmes modelled along the lines of the discredited colonial NLHA 'villagisation' schemes.

The Traditional Leaders Act (1999) formally restored customary chiefs' land allocation role in communal areas (although still notionally subject to approval by the Rural District Council) and created a governance structure that resembled a hybrid between the 1982 District Development Committees and the 1969 model for 'tribal' governance by customary chiefs. The Traditional Leaders Act (1996) extended to A1 resettlement areas the model of local governance used in communal areas, in some cases imposing 'headmen' and 'chiefs' where elected officials had represented villages for the previous 20 years (Kinsey, 2005). The reversal of policy served to ensure the further co-option of the office of the chief towards the logic of the state in terms of both the political and development

agendas. The reforms were and remain a part of the state's broader political agenda to win over the support of the chiefs. Indeed, ever since the reforms the chiefs have been beneficiaries of state largesse. Besides a monthly wage, chiefs were provided with brand new vehicles and their rural homes were given first priority in the rural electrification programme (Murisa, 2007).

From 1980 to 1996 smallholders in customary tenure areas were subordinated to a fusion of authority revolving around an awkward 'institutional mélange' in a similar situation to practice under late colonialism, including elected Rural District Councils (RDCs), traditional chieftainships and local ruling party cell structures (Tshuma, 1997:90). In practice, however, beneficiary participation was 'seriously curtailed' and development committees "were incapable of producing development plans" (Makumbe, 1996:47). The RDCs had limited financial autonomy in relation to the central state and became "basically incapacitated and weak agents of the centre" (Makumbe, 1996:85) The Rural District Councils Act of 1988 sought to provide overarching district authorities by incorporating commercial, communal and resettlement areas, but it was not particularly successful in ensuring a functional integrated rural authority structure. The decentralisation that emerged was a highly politicised process that strengthened the state at the expense of a nascent rural civil society, and this facilitated central government's "penetration of the periphery for purposes of control and manipulation of the local people" (Makumbe 1998:53).

The newly created Rural District Councils did not have sufficient resources to carry out development plans and they were also placed in direct competition with the District Development Committees (DDCs) comprised of representatives of various ministries operating at local level. Furthermore, councils and VIDCOs were heavily dependent on centrally generated and controlled resources. Alexander (2006:110-111) quotes a disgruntled Provincial Administrator saying,

> If you are going to plan and plans are going to be workable you also need to control the budget [and]… the system of VIDCO [to Provincial Administrator] ...was brought from another country but they forgot to bring the authority...There is no use of talking of decentralised structures when decision making staff is at head office.

Although the decentralised structures were initially greeted with excitement they failed to deliver on the practical goals of development, especially land allocation.

The measures of local government reform within the newly resettled areas should not be analysed in isolation from what the GoZ had begun in 1999 with the introduction of the Traditional Leaders Act (TLA) and also the way in which fast track land reform was organised. The TLA (1999) was part of a bigger shift from the prior concerns of democratic decentralisation which had seen Government establish local participatory structures such as the Village Development Committees and Ward Development Committees and reduce traditional authorities to ex-officio functionaries within these structures. The local government reforms of the 1980s had usurped the land allocation and conflict resolution powers of the chiefs and transferred them to the Rural District Councils. The TLA reinstated the juridical, political and social powers of the chief over land which included its allocation, resolution of disputes and use. In justifying this shift, which in essence weakens the power of the RDCs, the GoZ cited the empirical reality that in most cases the chiefs ignored these reforms and continued to hold court over land disputes and to allocate land. The people also seemed to prefer traditional courts over RDC processes. Anderson (1999) and Fontein (2009) have shown that in many areas the locals continued to pay allegiance to their chiefs. The GoZ thus justified its move as a form of capitulation in the face of unchanging local practice, restoring the powers of the chiefs through the TLA.

Thus, the shift in 1999 reflected a convenient convergence between demands from 'below' for familiar forms of authority and the 'challenges' of governance from above. The 'challenges' of governance essentially relate to the costs related to effective decentralisation. However, the objective of establishing control over chiefs who were viewed as popular by the GoZ cannot be dismissed.

Rural based Agitations for Reforms

Immediately after independence, there were expectations of a rapid and popularly controlled redistribution of land and these had been fueled by guerrilla promises and nationalist claims to the lost lands. In the first three years of independence (1980 to 1982) much of the land that was formally 'acquired' and then 'resettled' was done so as a means of regularising de facto occupations that had occurred during or just after the war (Cliffe, 1998). The Riddell Commission (GoZ, 1981) reported that by 1980 at least 50 000 families had taken land for themselves and forced government to modify its plans. Cliffe (2000) and Alexander 2203:86 have argued that land reform policy in the first three years of independence should be understood in the context of government's responses to squatter demands for land.

Land-needy rural households used a variety of methods to acquire land which included land occupations (squatting), natural resource poaching and fence cutting (Moyo, 2001:313; Alexander, 2003:87). The tactics used by land-hungry peasants varied according to the natural region; in the drier parts (NR IV and V) the tactics entailed 'poach grazing' (Alexander, 2003:85) while in the wetter areas (NR I to III) they involved land occupations. People turned to the local party structures to demand specific pieces of land on the basis of historical claims (Moyana, 1984).

Some of the tactics that are associated with breaking prevailing laws have been conceptualised by Moyo and Yeros (2005a) as 'uncivil' (paralegal) in contrast to the more legal tactics such as changing ineffective leaders through voting, writing petitions to government and forming structured groups as vehicles to channel member grievances (Moyo and Yeros, 2005a). The uncivil actions have been organised around underground movements that have at certain times, especially in the 1980s, received support from radical elements within the ruling party such as MPs and war veterans (Alexander, 2003:86-8).

In terms of the organisation of these demands for land, Moyo (2001:312) states that empirically a land occupation movement that is not necessarily nationally organised but one which shares common grievances has existed since the pre-independence period across the country. These land occupations have remained the single most important and visible strategy of advocacy for radical land reform in the country, especially since 1980 (Moyo, 2001:313). The essence of the movement has been the same since 1980 and the tactic of land occupations has been used to gain access to land in various tenure categories which include white-owned commercial land, state land and communal lands (Moyo, 2001:314). The occupations have gone through different phases of intensity throughout the post-independence period. Accordingly land occupations or squatting have tended to become an organised community strategy and state-owned lands increasingly became a soft target for occupations for years especially in Matabeleland and Manicaland where forests and parks are predominant" (Moyo, 2003:68).

Post-Colonial Rural Associational Life

Alongside land occupations the countryside was also undergoing a major process of reconstructing associational life and collective action. Zimbabwe's countryside was by the end of the 1980s comprised of a mosaic of associational forms including loose unstructured mutual networks such as faith-based groups, credit associations, women's groups, labour sharing groups, and the more structured peasant organisations which are either localised or national (Bratton, 1986:358). Their origins vary but labour and asset pooling formations tend to emerge out of the traditional institutional framework of cooperation, whilst those entailing the introduction of a new innovation, such as joint marketing or mobilisation of savings, are founded by charismatic leaders (especially peasant organisations). State-based local functionaries such as extension officers tend to have an influence in the formation of groups for sourcing inputs and for extension support (Mlambo, 2002). Rahmato (1991) argued that communities live by a shared system of values and that these traditional values have an integrative function, especially in mobilising networks of cooperation. In certain instances,

traditional leaders have been identified as a form of legitimising process of mobilisation into these networks (Chatterjee, 2002). Petty commodity producers are likely to enter into associative relationships because of the perceived benefits of such endeavour, especially in a context of repeated social, economic and environmental crises (Bratton, 1986:368). Some of the most common rural formations in Zimbabwe that played a significant part in enhancing livelihoods include national farmers' union, cooperatives and local farmer organisations

National Farmer Unions

There were three national farmer unions which serviced the fragmented categories of farmers according to land tenure and size. The largely white Commercial Farmers' Union (CFU) grew out of the Rhodesia National Farmers' Union (RNFU) which had formed in 1942 when various regional associations of large scale white farmers and ranchers agreed to unite under a central institution (Bratton, 1994). The RNFU (and then CFU) was an important pillar of white farming power bolstered by the passing of the Farmer Licensing Act (1942) which made it mandatory for all commercial farmers to buy a farming licence from the newly formed union (Herbst, 1988:268). Through this legislation the union avoided the problem of inadequate funding and focused on developing research and lobbying capacity.

There were two farmers' unions that represented black farmers; the Zimbabwe National Farmers' Union (ZNFU) and National Farmers' Association of Zimbabwe (NFAZ) these two were at the time of independence probably the only self-managed national smallholder unions on the continent, with 9 000 and 85 000 members respectively (Bratton, 1994:15).The Zimbabwe National Farmers' Union (ZNFU) was formed in 1945 to represent the special interests of smallholders who owned private farms from 20 to 200 ha and averaging 80 ha (Bratton, 1994:14) in the then African Purchase Areas. Mufema (1997:16-17) argues that this was a successor to the Bantu Farmers Association, formed in 1938, "a quasi-political group operating alongside and as part of the Rhodesia Bantu Voters Association, the Matabele Home Society and the Southern Rhodesia Native Welfare Society". The ZNFU represented the elite of the African smallholder farming community.

The National Farmers' Association of Zimbabwe (NFAZ) represented the majority of the farming community. Its membership was derived from the communal areas and it originated from the Master Farmer programme initiated by the settler regime to promote the adoption of modern farming methods among the peasantry. It was led by another tier of elite peasants based within the communal areas but it did not adequately embrace the aspirations of the land and asset poor. The NFAZ was severely handicapped by the fact that its constituency was fragmented, far from the main transportation and communication routes. It also lacked independent research capability, especially in a context in which no comprehensive research had been done on smallholder producers in the country before 1980 (Burgess, 1997:139).

The national farmer unions in Zimbabwe are better known for their role in lobbying for competitive producer prices for commodities. Since 1980 the unions representing different categories of farmers – smallholders in customary tenure areas, small-scale and large-scale commercial farmers – have combined their special skills such as research capacity (found among the large-scale commercial farmers' union) and strengths such as political muscle (resident within the black-led farmer unions) to lobby government to ensure that their members get market related prices for their commodities (Herbst, 1988:270). In the 1980s the NFAZ and the ZNFU had to rely on the CFU's elaborate computer models of costing production to make the case that farming was becoming less economically viable in the context of the producer prices established by the state (Herbst, 1988:270). Over these years the large unions developed expertise to negotiate with financial and marketing institutions for affordable credit to members (ZFU, undated: 4). They also bargained with manufacturers for discounts on inputs such as fertilisers (Interview with ZFU Programmes Manager, December 2008). The unions, taking advantage of their presence in the city, also engaged donor organisations for the initiation and implementation of commercial projects on the farms.

At independence, the government encouraged the unions to merge and "although this was imminent at several instances it never really came about" (Bratton, 1994:23). They did manage to set up a loose umbrella committee known as the Joint President Agricultural Committee (JPAC) comprising the presidents of the three unions and serving as a forum to discuss marketing, pricing and related issues (Bratton, 1994:24). The JPAC was described as a "practical and worthwhile forum in which frank and full discussions have taken place on economics, viability, crop reports, marketing labor and security" (Sibanda, 2002:334). The Committee's lifespan was cut short because of disagreements over land reform in 1994.

After the collapse of the JPAC, the state, in pursuit of the 'one sector, one union' policy, actively promoted the idea of a merger between the two black farmer unions. In August 1991, the Minister of Agriculture compelled the NFAZ to join the ZNFU to form the new Zimbabwe Farmers' Union (ZFU). However, the new union was dominated by leadership from the former ZNFU.

The process of the merger of the unions was perceived by members as undemocratic. District level and below structures of the NFAZ complained of inadequate consultation prior to the merger (Bratton, 1994:21) and many of the members felt excluded from the process of selecting national ZFU leaders. The national leadership was elected at a national congress which the NFAZ leadership had been led to believe would be the platform for discussing the process of merging the unions' structures from the district up to provincial levels before national elections could be held. However, when the Minister of Agriculture (who was the guest of honour) came to the podium he made the suggestion that the elections be held during the congress (Bratton, 1994). There was no agreement on the specific quotas for each organisation and almost all the leadership from NFAZ failed to gain entry into the new executive structures of the newly formed ZFU.

Prior to their merger, the two unions had developed different specialisations; the ZNFU had focused on policy advocacy on prices and inputs while the NFAZ had emphasised organising smallholders to respond positively to production and marketing incentives made available by government. The activities of the NFAZ had partially contributed towards the maize production boom experienced in the first five years of independence (Bratton, 1986). However, the new entity, with its recycled, mostly former ZNFU leadership, decided to take on new tasks which entailed transforming the organisation into a service delivery agency for farm supplies and new agricultural projects. The new activities included providing small farmers with credit, inputs, research and extension service. These activities potentially contributed to the greater visibility of the organisation at the local level.

However, it still failed to attract new members and by 1995 the ZFU membership was less than 10 percent of the total number of smallholder households in Zimbabwe. Mobilisation and recruitment was particularly challenging in the resettlement areas where neither of the former organisations had previously penetrated.

One of the weaknesses of the new union was its failure to recognise the high levels of internal differentiation among smallholders. The ZFU leadership resisted identifying different socioeconomic groups within their structures and potential membership. The refusal to accept internal differentiation was inconsistent with some of the strategic decisions made by the Union. For instance, the Union's structures of participation were designed according to landholding size, small scale commercial plot holders, indigenous large scale, and communal and resettlement area farmers (ZFU, undated: 3). The new leadership insisted that communal, resettlement and small-scale farmers had common interests with regard to agricultural issues (Bratton, 1994:27).

Failure to accept internal specificities led to an undifferentiated strategy for the whole union that did not respond adequately to the real needs of some of the actual members or those who might have joined. The new leadership was reluctant to target resources to the neediest members concentrated in the communal areas, instead giving priority to programmes aimed at securing tractors and pick-up trucks which promised to benefit mainly members in the small-scale commercial sector. Some of the assumed common interests included the need for improved availability of seasonal inputs, transport

and markets. They disregarded differences in infrastructural developments especially in resettlement areas, the land tenure challenges that resettled farmers faced, and the overcrowding that communal area based farmers suffered (Bratton, 1994:28). Even those who retained membership within the new structures were widely differentiated, while policy was dominated by elite 'capable farmers' whose demands for freehold land for productive purposes were different and far from representing the majority of black farmer demands.

Officially the ZFU endorsed the programme of land redistribution but only to competent farmers. Its position on customary tenure was that 'deserving farmers' should be granted freehold title. The ZFU tended to divide membership according to an unclear framework of competency, focusing its activities on the medium scale commercial farming areas and neglecting problems specific to communal and resettlement area farmers. Hence, despite the officially granted monopoly that the ZFU had in the representation of small and medium scale farmers, it did not adequately represent the different socioeconomic sub-groups within the farming community.

Local Farmer Organisations

Rural life in Zimbabwe is complex and is neither fully commoditised nor fully pre-capitalist but rather inherent within it is a hybrid of both worlds. The associational forms that have emerged are in most cases alert to these complexities and at times mobilise and operate within pre-capitalist social relations to enhance access to the market. The most commonly existing formation is the local farmer organisation which operates under a variety of forms, such as farmer clubs, community- based organisations, savings and credit associations and women's clubs. Exact statistics on the total number of local organisations in Zimbabwe are not available, but it was estimated in 1982 that 44 percent of households in customary areas belonged to such associational forms and in 2002 it was estimated that there were 3 000 local organisations in Zimbabwe (Bratton, 1986:371; Moyo, 2002; Sibanda, 2002). A local level study by Arnaiz (1998) on rural responses to economic reforms in the late 1990s in Shamva found out that over 50 percent of the smallholders in the district belonged to a local farmer group. These are often localised, at times registered with the local government structures or the national farmers' union and with hierarchical structures and defined mandates, although they have been found to modify themselves in response to the grievances affecting a particular community.

Amongst a variety of the other roles local groups are involved in defending the interests of smallholder rural households from outside threats and are part of an attempt to preserve a way of life in times of social stress. Other objectives may include social, religious, mutual welfare or community integration. There are two broad types of local farmer organisations, the agricultural and non-agricultural groups (Arnaiz, 1998). The agricultural groups can also be further divided into two categories – asset-sharing groups and access groups.

Non-agricultural groups include welfare associations, women's groups focused on income generation (such as sewing and poultry production) and savings clubs. The benefits derived from these non-agricultural activities play an important role in supporting farm-related activities such as the purchase of inputs. These groups generally have a medium to large membership and their objectives range from social welfare, to solidarity and promotion of identity either through religion or recruitment into cults or secret societies (Rahmato, 1991). Some of the groups take advantage of the existence of ethnic and kinship networks or occupational affiliations (Rahmato, 1991:4).

ESAP, Economic Decline and Collapse of Consensus within ZANU

In July 1990, the government released an economic policy statement, Zimbabwe-A Framework for Economic Reform (1991-1995), in which it announced a major policy shift from state-led economic development towards a market based approach. The five year programme was premised on orthodox reform packages prescribed by the IMF, including public sector reform, trade liberalisation, deficit reduction and creation of a 'favourable climate' for economic growth, the target of which was five percent per annum (Sachikonye, 2003). Achievement of this meant "moving away from a highly

regulated economy to one where market forces play a greater role within the context of government objectives" (GoZ, 1990). The programme entailed correcting monetary and fiscal imbalances and other inefficiencies emanating from centralised domestic markets and trade regulation (Moyo, 2000:161).

The incentives offered in agriculture were mainly targeted at motivating production for the export market. The package offered to exporters (the bulk of whom were large scale farmers) included a nine percent tax reduction and an Export Retention Scheme (ERS), which allowed exporters to retain a proportion of income in foreign currency with which to import foreign goods (Selby, 2006:23). The dominant thinking within the framing of the ESAP strategy was that the concentration of agricultural production or land use on non-traditional exports such as horticulture, wildlife and related tourism land use would yield positive environmental and socioeconomic benefits (GoZ, 1990). The privileging of export oriented land use through various incentives led to a shift in land use patterns from household and domestic markets towards new export land uses, to the extent that by 1996 close to 30 percent of the entire LSCF (about 1 500 of the farms) had become engaged in one or more of the new land uses (Moyo, 2000:163).

However, the adjustment did not create sufficient incentives for the smallholder sector to increase production or diversify into new land uses. The overarching principles of liberal economic reforms subordinated land reform policy to the philosophy of property rights, thus effectively enforcing the 'willing buyer and willing seller' approach that had been under threat with the expiry of the Lancaster House conditionality on amending the constitution. It was considered to be a matter for markets to resolve the land question under the ESAP regime (World Bank, 1991; GoZ, 1991; Moyo, 2000:52). Furthermore, ESAP did not contain interventions aimed at resolving smallholder specific constraints such as discriminatory financial constraints, distorted water rights which favoured the LSCF, and the lack of access to essential infrastructure such as dams and irrigation equipment.

The adjustment programme had a negative effect on smallholder agricultural production; while it removed tariff restrictions on agricultural commodities it also removed state subsidies for small scale agriculture without necessarily putting in place an alternative financing mechanism for the sector. Secondly, while a major component of most of the adjustment policies in Africa was the upward review of agricultural commodity prices, the Zimbabwean situation was slightly different. Agricultural commodity prices were mostly already at par with market trends due to the previous lobbying efforts of the three farmer unions discussed above. In line with commodity price reforms marketing boards were commercialised and converted to 'purchasers of last resort' while private traders were allowed to compete (Moyo and Murisa, 2008:78). Commodity prices began to fall as the economy opened up through the open general import license rule, in which adjusting countries had to ensure that they lowered tariffs on a number of commodities. The situation was compounded by the loss of urban jobs which had been crucial in financing agricultural production and also the onset of inflation which eroded incomes. In summary, the effects of structural adjustment smallholders were

> the integration of smallholders into the formal seed market under the control of transnational corporations…in addition to the fertiliser and chemical market which thesecorporations already controlled; the extension of peasant production to marginal land, the intensification of rural women's labour and the upsurge of demand for land(Moyo and Murisa, 2008:78).

Furthermore, structural adjustment led to the reinforcement of the division of labour between smallholders and large-scale farmers (Moyo, 2000). The large-scale farmers expanded operations to non-traditional farming activities which included ostrich farming, eco-tourism and increased hectarage under cash-crops. The smallholders remained in petty commodity production of grain staples due to historical constraints such as land, water, credit and infrastructure (Moyo, 2002).

The immediate outcomes from the ESAP period were economic decline, political tension and a social pandemic. Formal employment decreased and 60 percent of the population was earning less than US$1 a day. The majority (80%) of those affected lived in the rural areas (UNDP, HDR, 1999). In

1996 the GoZ officially abandoned ESAP as a macroeconomic development and stabilisation strategy and developed a more home grown strategy called the Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST), which nevertheless pursued similar goals to the previous ESAP. The programme did not receive the anticipated external support and the country experienced a sustained economic meltdown between 1997 and 2000.

The regime responded by entrenching itself in the rural areas through restoring traditional authority that is appointed and compensated for by the Ministry of Local Government with land allocating powers (discussed above). When the regime could not deliver the promise of land it sought to 'defer' to the land allocation powers of chiefs. During the same period the Ministry of Agriculture was engaged in efforts to ensure that the two farmers unions (ZNFU and NFAZ) servicing the majority black farmers' needs merged-despite the different category of farmers and needs that each served. This was part of the regime's cooptation agenda.

Post 2000 Land Occupations

Exactly a day after the announcement of the February 2000 referendum results rejecting the draft constitution, war veterans occupied a derelict farm in Masvingo belonging to a white farmer (Sadomba, 2008a:119) and this triggered a wave of occupations such that by the end of the month this had occurred on 30 farms across the country. At their height in June about 800 farms had been occupied (Moyo and Yeros, 2005b:188). Yet again the response of the state to the new wave of occupations was ambivalent. There seemed to be two camps, one that preferred to pursue a legalistic route and another that was "in favour of radical nationalist solutions to the land question" (Moyo and Yeros, 2005b:188). When the national land movement re-emerged in 2000 the latter camp appeared able to dominate but not without resistance (Helliker et al., 2008:14). Unlike in earlier times when land occupations were resisted by the state, this phase of occupations enjoyed tacit endorsement from the Government, for instance whereas during the earlier land occupations the state had evicted the land occupiers, in the post-2000 period the land occupation movement received logistical support from the ruling party and the state (Moyo and Yeros, 2005b:192).

The land occupations from 2000 have been characterised by some (for instance, Hammar et al., 2003; Human Rights Watch, 2003) as either contrived or farcical or narrowly instrumental for electioneering (Moyo, 2001). Clearly it was not entirely coincidental that fast track land reform was unleashed when it was, at a moment when the ruling party faced for the first time in 20 years, a credible political threat to its success in the forthcoming parliamentary elections (Fontein, 2009:2). Many of the land occupations were spearheaded by war veterans and in a few cases by traditional leaders (Moyo and Yeros, 2005b:189). The overriding social base of the land occupiers was the rural-based petty commodity producers and the landless from neighbouring customary areas, and in certain instances it expanded to include urban unemployed elements (Chaumba et al., 2003a:9). The categories of people participating in land occupations included farm workers, urban unemployed and people from communal areas, including those on resettlement waiting lists, who joined the occupations to enhance their chances of resettlement (Moyo, 2001:323). Rural and urban elites also participated in the land occupations with the intention of attaining more land for grazing or in order to penetrate new frontiers for petty trading purposes (Moyo, 2001; Chaumba et al., 2003a:23).

Although the land occupations seemed chaotic, it has been shown through various studies (Moyo, 2001; Moyo and Yeros, 2005; Chaumba et al, 2003a; Sadomba, 2008aandb) that structures and procedures were established in land and beneficiary identification and allocation of plots. Smaller and localised administrative units capable of making decisions within a short amount time were established in most of the locales. At district level the new land committees included local government ministry officials, traditional leaders, the ruling party, security organs and war veterans. Locally the role and place of traditional leaders varied, in some instances they were called in to lead the land identification process based on historical claims and in others they were asked to legitimise occupations and also to 'bless' the occupation (Chaumba et al., 2003a:21). In certain instances traditional leaders competed among themselves in defense of the boundaries of their territories and

also competed with local government structures and outsiders in order to settle their 'subjects' (Moyo and Yeros, 2007b).

A field survey conducted by Chaumba et al. (2003a) noted the visible leadership role of war veterans and the replication of an 'army barrack' like form of organisation in which curfews were established and visitors had to report to the base commander first. Furthermore, the "organisation of the base camp reveals a highly militarised organisational structure to an extent that the base camps took on the semblance of a military camp, with for example, occupiers being segregated by sex" (Chaumba et al, 2003b:29). War veterans played an influential role in the land committees, continuing to influence the identification of land for acquisition and vetting land beneficiaries based on waiting lists submitted by customary area leaders. The land committees emerged as the most influential local institutions in bringing order and coherence to the implementation process at both district and provincial levels (Chaumba et al., 2003a:11). Their roles included mobilisation of communities, monitoring of progress in terms of pegging of land, regulation of the actual occupations, identifying land to be expropriated by the state and resolving land conflicts (Moyo, 2001; Chaumba et al., 2003b).

Fast Track and Re-Assertion of State Control and Authoritarian Populism

Whilst land occupations were ongoing the GoZ launched the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) on 15 July 2000. The objectives of 'fast track' were to respond to "compelling national economic and social imperatives of poverty eradication and foster economic development" (PLRC, 2003:18). In essence fast track meant that the GoZ would "speed up the pace of land acquisition and resettlement" and the main target of the policy was "the immediate identification of 5 million hectares for compulsory acquisition and an accelerated programme of planning, demarcation and settlement placement on all acquired farms" (GoZ, 2001a:6-7). It is important to note that land occupations did not necessarily stop because of the announcement of an official government programme of land acquisition but rather they were energised by the programme. By the end of 2002 fast track land reform had compulsorily acquired some ten million hectares, or approximately 90 percent of white commercial farmland and redistributed most of it to 127 000 smallholder households and 8 000 middle capitalist farmers (Moyo and Yeros, 2005b:188). This was a considerable increase in the number of farms acquired, especially when compared with the approximately 800 farms that had been occupied prior to fast track between February and June 2000. In the fourth year of the fast track programme the number of beneficiaries increased to 140 866 households allocated land under A1 and 14 500 households under A2 by the end of 2005 (GoZ, 2006:2). In practice land occupiers would occupy farms that would have been listed for acquisition by the GoZ, and in other instance the occupiers' actions would compel government to list a previously unlisted farm.

There are three significant features of the fast track approach. Firstly, it was associated with the reimposition and resurgence of legalistic and technocratic planning approaches to land reform, in the process marginalising some of the land occupation era structures and centres of power. The policy was only adopted after the revision of relevant legislation. The Constitution had been amended in April 2000 to "reaffirm the financial obligations of the British government towards land reform in Zimbabwe" and the Land Acquisition Act of 1992 was amended in May 2000 to "clarify and streamline various procedural aspects of the acquisition process and to prescribe new compensation rules in accordance with the constitution" (GoZ, 2001a:9).

Secondly, whereas land occupations prior to June 2000 were highly dependent on local decision making, the inception of the fast track programme in July 2000 is associated with the centralisation of the coordination of land reform. At the apex, the Cabinet Committee on Resettlement and Rural Development (CRD) under the chair of the Vice President and comprising relevant ministries was revived to focus on "policy formulation and coordination of rural resettlement and development" (GoZ, 2001b: 16). The technical arm of this committee was the Working Party of the CRD which was made up of permanent secretaries heading the ministries within the CRD and under the chair of the Principal Director in the Office of the Vice President (GoZ, 2001b:17). Other national level structures included the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Resettlement and Rural Development (IMCRRD), the

National Land Identification Committee (NLIC) and the Land Task Force of Ministers. The land identification task was decentralised through Provincial and District Land Identification Committees, the former being chaired by a provincial governor and the latter by a district administrator (GoZ, 2001b:17-18).

Thirdly, fast track was also characterised by the re-adoption of earlier strict technical criteria for land acquisition, infrastructural planning and rezoning of land. The policy document states that land for resettlement should either be "derelict, underutilised, under multiple ownership, foreign owned or near communal areas" (GoZ, 2001a:8). The design of the models of resettlement was characterised by technical concerns of productivity and infrastructural support. Concerning the A1 for instance, the policy document lists several types of socioeconomic infrastructure that were required to be put in place during resettlement, such as "a borehole for every 20-25 families, a clinic for 500 families, a dip tank…a decent housing unit per household" (GoZ, 2001b:11).

These technical considerations were not part of the 1998 and 2000 land occupations that had contributed towards the radical shift in land acquisition. Whilst fast track in itself symbolised a radical turn within the ZANU (PF) government, it also marked a break with and the onset of marginalisation of the war veteran leadership and movement as a whole (Sadomba 2008a: 187). The carefully constructed bureaucratic maze associated with fast track did not provide room for radical and non-state actors such as war veterans. Through the re-organisation of resettlement schemes a number of radical war veterans lost plots they had allocated themselves, while others who seemed pliable to close cooperation with government were re-allocated farms with improved infrastructure. Sadomba (2008a:187-189) discusses at length the various incidents in which war veterans were removed from their plots and sidelined from the local land acquisition structures. 'Fast track' empowered the District Administrators to appoint members of the District Land Committees. In Mazowe District in Mashonaland West the District Administrator barred the war veteran representative from attending the District Land Committee meetings and these meetings mostly overturned allocations that had taken place prior to the introduction of the 'fast track' land reform programme (Sadomba, 2008a:190). Fast track served the role of marginalising the war veteran movement, whose political clout had significantly increased during the time of land occupations to the extent that its ambitions could not be trusted by the oligarchs in ZANU (PF) (Sadomba, 2008a:190).

Although the fast track reform was introduced as a programme to finally resolve the land question, it was also a government strategy to take over leadership on land reform from the war veteran leadership. One of the immediate changes brought about by the fast track programme was the manner in which chiefs were elevated to be the sole selectors of land beneficiaries for A1 schemes (Fontein, 2009:4). During the same period war veterans were being removed or marginalised from the District Land Committees (Sadomba 2008a:187).

The introduction of traditional village authority is problematic in the age of democracy where leadership positions are filled through elections. The lack of consultation on village heads also extends into the definition of their roles and powers within the new communities. The emergence of village heads is part of the GoZ efforts to establish local forms of control. However, it is also important to note that these local functionaries are not necessarily agents of cooption on behalf of the state. Their popularity and legitimacy derives from their relationship to and defense of the interests of their constituents.

Besides the indirect forms of rule the state's agrarian reform agenda is represented by the extension agent. The extension officer is not just a functionary of strengthening farm production but is focused on establishing a certain form of agricultural production and environmental conservation ethos and this marks a continuation from the late 1930s when extension was introduced to 'modernise' African land use patterns. Thus, even though the agrarian reforms programme and especially smallholder production is facing severe constraints, the state's agenda and forms of cooptation and control are intact. The local farmer groups that have emerged are in a precarious balance between the state and the members' interests but so far these have converged on the need for improved farm production.

Post Land Reform Social Organisation and Agency

As discussed earlier, rural social organisation is complex. It is composed of a number of interrelated associational forms of cooperation, some of which are highly visible to the outsider while others are organically embedded in the manner in which certain activities are organised. A field survey carried out by the then AIAS (now SMAIAS) found that there are a number of ways in which newly resettled households cooperate with each other as a response to weak or ineffective post resettlement support measures. The motivation for cooperation ranges from political to socio-economic imperatives.

The land redistribution process was implemented in such a way that it brought together strangers from different backgrounds to settle on previously large-scale farms that had been subdivided into smaller units for the land beneficiaries. Most of these previously large farms had immoveable productive and non-productive assets that could not be utilised effectively by a single household resettled on six ha of land. As part of its efforts to rationalise access to such equipment the GoZ issued a directive that all A1 households should share the productive and social infrastructure left behind by the previous owner without necessarily outlining how this would be done (GoZ, 2001b:2). Productive infrastructure found on the farms included tobacco barns, dip-tanks, cattle handling facilities and irrigation equipment. Social infrastructure included farmhouses and farm worker compounds (GoZ 2001b:3). The farm divisions in A1 areas created common grazing lands which had to be utilised by the resettled beneficiaries on a particular former large scale commercial farm, thereby suggesting another arena for engagement among the beneficiaries. The survey found seven common areas of cooperation among households resettled on what used to be a large-scale farm and these are; sharing of productive infrastructure, sharing of social infrastructure, reciprocal hiring of equipment, labour sharing, combined farming operations, sharing of advice and information, common membership in similar associational forms.

Structured Multifaceted Farmers Groups

Recent studies by Murisa (2007, 2009, 2011) and Masuko (2009) have found that even though beneficiary selection did not emphasise lineage links the newly resettled beneficiaries have set about establishing networks of cooperation that include structured local farmer groups in the few years of being settled together. Murisa (2011) discusses in more detail the extent to which these groups have facilitated farm production and the creation of a sense of community in the absence of state or NGO intervention. There are many reasons for associationalism and they include the previous socialisation of beneficiaries, most of whom come from customary tenure areas where production, consumption and accumulation were usually organised within certain identifiable frameworks of association. These frameworks of association include the lineage structure, farmer unions, local clubs, and projects of cooperation organised by NGOs. The second largest segment of beneficiaries comes from the urban areas where there are varied associational activities, ranging from rotating savings and credit clubs among vegetable vendors to religious activities. These groups are multi-focused, the most common activities including mobilising resources through pooling of labour, productive assets and expertise, ensuring access to critical inputs such as fertilisers and seeds, and mediation of farmers' grievances with regard to production.

There are various layers of associational activity. Representative associations have been established at district and the Intensive Conservation Area[1] (ICA) and the ward level in many provinces. In Bromley in Goromonzi district the land beneficiaries have formed the Bromley Farmers Association (BFA) with approximately 250 active members drawn from the A1 and A2 farms. The Association was formed in 2005 and seeks to address common grievances within the resettled community (interviews with BFA members, September 2008). The Association has been involved since its establishment in the bulk buying of inputs such as fertilisers and seeds for members. The executive committee of the association is almost entirely made up of A1 beneficiaries with just one A2 farmer as an ex-officio

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[1] An ICA comprises 4-5 administrative wards and ICAs make up the district.

member. However, the Association has been facing viability challenges since 2008 because it failed to secure inputs for its members and has not managed to come up with a constitution that clarifies its mandate and objectives (interview with AREX officer, September 2008).

The Zvimba South Farmers Association services half of the Zvimba district, which includes Banket and surrounding areas. The Association has a pre-fast track resettlement history. It was created by local leaders (mostly politicians) to foster improved yields and nurture good agricultural practice among smallholder farmers but was always hampered by low membership levels. In the aftermath of the fast track programme the Association experienced a new lease of life. It was revived as a mobilising platform for those who had been offered land but were struggling to obtain inputs (interview with Executive Committee member of the Association, August 2006). The Association represents all the newly resettled farmers and customary tenure area households. Since 2003 the Association has been involved in securing inputs for its members through bulk buying or entering into contract farming arrangements. However, due to its broad-based membership it has not managed entirely to satisfy the differentiated internal interests and has been seen to prioritise the interests of the A2 farmers.

While local farmer groups have emerged on almost every A1 settlement this does not necessarily mean they are an adequate response to the constraints faced by the newly resettled farmers. However, without romanticizing the significance of these formations there is need to appreciate their significance and the clues these formations provide to understanding how social organisation in the newly resettled areas is evolving under austere economic circumstances and as part of a bundle of strategies to extricate themselves from dependency on the state. Their emergence has been a critical intervention in the survival of the newly resettled communities. The benefits derived from common membership are broader than the stated objectives of the group.

These formations have within a short space of time improved farm production capacities, especially at Dunstan and Dalkeith farms. The groups have made a contribution towards broader rural participation by nurturing democratic practice within and outside the organisation. At an immediate level local organisations have managed to shift the locus of rural power from traditional structures (headmen and chiefs) in terms of organising communities for farm production and relations of exchange. They have also contributed to pluralising social organisation beyond the traditional structure. Their emergence has not been a neat process but combines self-organisation and externally imposed rationalities to engage in collective action in order to lessen the external agents' (in the case of the newly resettled areas, the state) burden of introducing new farm innovations and direct support.

The attempts by the land beneficiaries to form associational forms are part of the initial steps towards addressing broader issues of distribution and long term economic sustainability although they do not seem to have a coherent viable agrarian vision. Furthermore, the groups that have emerged have no links with both the national and global networks of rural producers' associations that are at the forefront of mobilising against the negative effects of globalisation especially the removal of subsidies to smallholder farmers, rather the forms of social organisation that have emerged are deeply subordinated to the state. These developments form part of a long-held tradition within the post-colonial state of usurping legitimacy found in local authority structures and institutions to its own ends. This has involved reconfiguring traditional structures to be more focused on servicing the needs of the state and also to ensure that traditional authority functionaries derive their power from the state. In terms of local cooperation the strategy has entailed co-opting the emerging formations through the provision of subsidies and deploying a modernising state agent in the form of the extension officer. Thus, whilst land reform has to a certain extent accommodated the majority poor, the ensuing local government and agrarian reforms are more focused on limiting their participation in broader processes of political engagement around distribution and accumulation and their own governance.

Significance of Emerging Associational Forms

Using the same schema of reasoning as Mamdani (1996) and Gramsci's notion of civil society, the discussion below summarises the significance of the fast track reforms, associationalism in local farmer groups and village authority. As already mentioned, the fast track programme not only redistributed land but significantly altered relations of property ownership, with the state becoming the landlord holding land in trust for all the A1 and A2 beneficiaries. This is in direct contrast to the previous situation in which land was either privately owned or held in trust by clan elders on behalf of their people.

The introduction of permissory tenure that is statutorily defined within A1 settlement gives the immediate impression of the expansion of citizenship to the countryside. Besides the introduction of civil laws in property relations the programme is linked with associational activity outside the parameters of kinship (except in few instances). These developments suggest that the hallmarks of civil society have been attained. However the movement towards this civil society remains constrained by a number of factors. Firstly, it lacks an organic leadership (what Gramsci calls 'the intellectual') to challenge for autonomy against the state. The leadership previously provided by war veterans during the period of occupations has dissipated. There are remnants of war veteran leadership within some of the local farmer groups but it is too fragmented and isolated to have a significant impact on broader mobilisation. Secondly fast track resettlement areas remain not only isolated from the national smallholders' union but also from global and national civil society comprising a complex web of networks involving local and international actors such as NGOs, unions and donors. The local farmer groups that have emerged operate outside the parameters of this civil society. They sit uneasily in both the civil society and as subordinate agents of the state as they help their members to undertake productive and economic activities, a role associated with the state. They remain shunned and isolated by other civil society based networks despite the state's attempts to civilise the fast track resettlement areas by ensuring that the land beneficiaries are legitimate property holders through the 17th Amendment to the Constitution which nationalised all the agricultural land.

The continued exclusion of fast track resettlement areas from the networks characterising civil society is not surprising. Civil society discourse in Zimbabwe and globally is united around the need to protect human rights and it is the interpretation of the right of the individual that is problematic. As discussed above the constraint view as an approach to human rights tends to be ahistorical and status quo oriented. The Commercial Farmers' Union managed to operate within this sphere of rights and to defend the rights of its members to due process in land redistribution, while disregarding the historical theft of land, labour and livestock. Other civil society networks including the ZFU were also mobilised to defend the racially-defined privilege on the basis of due process and the 'rule of law'. The CFU in the process emphasised (to the point of exaggeration) its importance to the economy and the urban civil society based networks joined in the process of ridiculing 'fast track' as "chaotic and likely to lead to a decline in agricultural production" (Zimbabwe Crisis Coalition and National Constitutional Assembly Joint Press Statement, August 2001). While the fears of production decline are genuine, the statements from urban-based civil society were not accompanied by viable alternatives to the 'fast track' approach.

The fact that fast track resettlement areas are isolated from receiving support from development and relief NGOs is convenient for both civil society and the state. It simplifies a very complex problem where civil society, by choosing not to engage with the land beneficiaries, can continue to dismiss the land reform process as largely benefiting politically connected elites. In the meantime, the ZANU (PF) dominated state remains the only active external agent in providing support. In the absence of partnerships with civil society the local farmer groups in newly resettled areas have entered into relationships of survival with the state. This is convenient for the ZANU (PF) dominated government for two reasons. Firstly, the state and the party remain the only players active in responding to the challenges these communities face, and this dependence entrenches clientelist relations. Secondly the GoZ uses the isolation of the newly resettled areas from any outside help to strengthen their case of

sanctions. The rules of engagement with the state have been mostly welfare and production oriented to an extent that the politics of local farmer groups remain very underdeveloped.

However, although these formations look similar to the groups existing in customary areas they need not to be treated as similar. In customary areas, they are a product of a society with established structures of authority, while in the newly resettled areas they are emerging within a space where there is no defined framework of cooperation and the legitimacy of local authority is in a state of flux and contestation. In certain instances, such as in Goromonzi, the local farmer groups have become a more dominant structure of inclusion and allocation of resources, especially in the absence of the lineage form of organisation, while in rare cases such as at Dalkeith, where beneficiary selection was on the basis of belonging within a certain lineage group, traditional authority functionaries have taken the lead in establishing village structures that include the farmer group. There is a need to qualify the foregoing by briefly discussing the significance of the emergence of traditional authority in these areas.

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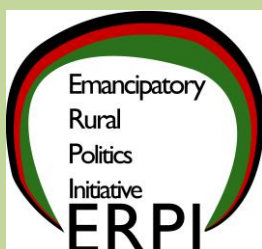
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Tendai Murisa is a development practitioner and researcher in the areas of pro-poor development across Africa. Tendai was educated at Leeds University (MA Development Studies) and at Rhodes University (DPhil Sociology). He has over 15 years experiences working across Africa initially as a Research Fellow at the African Institute for Agrarian Studies (now rebranded as the Sam Moyo Africa Institute for Agrarian Studies-SMAIAS). He is now the Managing Partner at SIVIO (www.sivioafrica.org), a Pan-African social enterprise focused on enhancing institutional effectiveness in addressing Africa's transformation challenge.

The Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative (ERPI) is a new initiative focused on understanding the contemporary moment and building alternatives. New exclusionary politics are generating deepening inequalities, jobless 'growth', climate chaos, and social division. The ERPI is focused on the social and political processes in rural spaces that are generating alternatives to regressive, authoritarian politics. We aim to provoke debate and action among scholars, activists, practitioners and policymakers from across the world that are concerned about the current situation, and hopeful about alternatives.

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